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THE THOUGHT OF THE ROMANS IN THE REPUBLICAN ERA UPON PROGRESS AND DECADENCE

BY

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A. B. Illinois College, 1918

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

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IN

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

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August 1, 1919

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY
SUPERVISION BY Helen Sidney Steed
ENTITLED The Thought of the Romans in the Republican Era
upon Progress and Decadence
BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF Master of Arts in Classics

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*Required for doctor's degree but not for master's

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THE THOUGHT OF THE ROMANS IN THE REPUBLICAN PERIOD UPON THE SUBJECT OF PROGRESS AND DECADENCE.

I The General Question of Progress and Decadence.

Four years of war have led people, hitherto unthinking, to question the institutions of modern civilization. Since the year 1914 so often have we heard that "civilization has failed" or that "Christianity has failed" that these statements have almost become platitudes. But the man or woman, whose high regard for the nobility of human nature has been disappointed and discouraged at the spectacle of a world conflict carried on with the aid of the most highly cultivated minds under the control of the most primal and unrestrained passions, has taken comfort in the thought that the war might teach much that was good. It is a significant characteristic of our time that in most cases, the questioner believes that good will come from the war although it may not be felt for many years. Even in these days of comparative pessimism when the excitement and the enthusiasm of war have left us and the task of reconstruction confronts us, our hope for the future still lives. Our pessimism is for the near future; we fear lest we have not learned our lessons well enough to save our children from our sufferings and our sins. Our optimism goes farther than this; what the near future can not do, we leave to the distant future to accomplish.

One may be impatient of the age; he may find in it much that is evil and little that is good, but he looks to the future for a gradual change of balance, an increasing amount of good and a decreasing amount of evil. When the modern man brings charges against

the present, he accuses the past. He seeks in it the tendencies which have produced the present state and declares that the world must find a new plan for the future since the old ones have failed.

Expression of modern optimism is found in proverb and literature "Every cloud has its silver lining," and, "It is always darkest just before dawn", are stock expressions of encouragement.

Goethe found in life eternal activity and in activity eternal good. He understood the world too well to deny the existence of evil force but he had supreme faith in its futility.

"Es irrt der Mensch so lang er strebt",¹ is born of Goethe's consciousness of the weaknesses of men. But this is only a small part of his philosophy. Mephistopholes introduces himself to Faust as,

"Ein Theil von jener Kraft,

Die stets die Böse will und stets die Gute schafft" ²,

In further explanation he continues,

"Ich bin der Geist, der stets verneint!" ³ .

But mere negation cannot exist; activity is universal. Goethe speaks of,

"Das Werdende, das ewig wirkt und lebt." ⁴

In England Matthew Arnold believed in a progress brought about by the intelligent endeavor of men. He pictures to us in Rugby Chapel the human race marching through the world to the "City of God" inspired and guided by the truer finer souls who appear here and there throughout the ages. Arnold is interesting to us because, although a firm believer in progress, he is very conservative and continually questions the present and the future but condemns neither

1. Faust, Prolog im Himmel. 3. Ibidem, Studierzimmer.

2. Ibidem, Studierzimmer. 4. Ibidem, Prolog im Himmel.

Ralph Waldo Emerson perhaps more strongly than any literary man of our own country believed in progress and in Compensation he has given out to the world his hopefulness and joy. "The soul refuses all limits. It affirms in man always an Optimism, never a Pessimism.

His life is a progress and not a station. His instinct is trust

* * * * *

Such, also, is the natural history of calamity. The changes which break up at short intervals the prosperity of men, are advertisements of a nature whose law is growth.

* * * * *

But to us, in our lapsed estate, resting not advancing, resisting not cooperating with the divine expansion, this growth comes by shocks.

We can not part with our friends. We cannot let our angels go. We do not see that they only go out, that archangels may come in. We are idolaters of the old. We do not believe in the riches of the soul, in its proper eternity and omnipresence. We do not believe there is any force in to-day to rival or re-create that beautiful yesterday. We linger in the ruins of the old tent, where once we had bread and shelter and organs, nor believe that the spirit can feed, cover, and nerve us again. We cannot again find aught so dear, so sweet, so graceful. But we sit and weep in vain. The voice of the Almighty saith "Up and onward for evermore!" We cannot stay amid the ruins. Neither will we rely on the New, and so we walk ever with reverted eyes, like those monsters who look backwards!"

This last passage which I have quoted to illustrate the modern idea of progress, charges mankind with a characteristic directly opposed to the one I have been discussing. The inconsistency arises from the inconsistencies of man's mind and emotions. The river of thought does not run in a smooth stream but there are eddies, rapids and back currents. In the minds of the many this idea of progress, though almost universal, is extremely vague. The individual longs for the past in times of marked change; the present is full of pain; the future is far off, a mere name.

It is advisable to discuss briefly what the term progress means. Material progress we may dismiss at once. It is not human progress although the two are not entirely disconnected; the application of material progress is a part of human progress.

F. S. Marvin describes Human Progress as made up of three factors, an increase of knowledge, an increase of power, and an increase of appreciation of the humanity of others. He calls attention to two early ideas of progress, both of them formulated by Frenchmen: Turgot believed that "the total mass of the human race marches continually though sometimes slowly towards an ever-increasing perfection". Condorcet saw, "the human race, freed from its chains, marching with firm tread on the road of truth and virtue and happiness." ¹

A. J. Todd also quotes Condorcet in a statement of the aims of progress. They are a destruction of inequality between nations, equality between citizens of the same nation, and the real perfection of man. The emphasis of the political aspect of progress makes this of particular interest at this time. ²

1. Progress and History, pp. 7 - 26.

2. Theories of Social Progress.

I state my own definition as follows: Human progress is an increasing understanding of nature, an increasing understanding of man and an increasing application of all understanding to life. I have used the term understanding rather than knowledge because knowledge of itself is not enough. Some element of feeling must be added to make it a force and this union of emotion and knowledge I have called understanding.

The idea of progress, as we know it, has not always existed. It became a well defined theory about the time of the French Revolution.

Is the concept of human progress a sound one around which to center human activity? Can the man of a highly civilized race say with any justification to his savage brother "I am thy master for I am a better man than you"? Obviously to answer these questions is far beyond my power. It is not my purpose to even consider them.

I turn away to a period long passed when, as now, there existed a complex social system, a rich and highly developed literature. A study of the ancient classical interpretations of the meaning of life cannot be without value to us to-day, for in this way we may learn the excellence and the weakness of our own beliefs. The detailed examination of the whole mass of material is impossible at this time but before a careful investigation of the literature of a single period can be entered upon, a brief general survey of the thought of the Classical Era is necessary.

Directly opposed to the theory of progress is that of decline. In its simplest form it holds that the world and all it contains has decayed gradually from an early excellence to present inferiority and that it will continue to degenerate in the future.

Important because of its connection with the idea of decline

is the legend of the Golden Age, which in early days was a part of the Greek religious belief and which later affected their philosophic thought.

K. F. Smith says that the myth had existed long before the time of Homer.¹ Hesiod has given us the first picture of a Golden Age and the decline which followed. The world is divided into five Ages, the first of which is the Golden Age. The men of that time were simple kindly souls living under the rule of Cronos. Like gods they lived without grief or suffering or toil and when death came it was as if they fell into a heavy drowsiness which became a deep sleep. When all these had passed away, the silver race followed, inferior to the others, yet some honor was theirs. These too vanished from the earth and a third order arose, men of the Bronze Age and they were in no way equal to the silver race. A fourth order of men followed and these were noble and mighty demi-gods. To this race, according to Hesiod's interpretation, belong Homer's heroes. After death they went to the Isles of the Blest and Cronos, once ruler of the earth, governs them there. Now upon the earth live a race of men who suffer many evils and inflict many wrongs. They are the men of the iron age. "I would", adds the poet, "I were not of this race."²

The Orphics, who flourished during the sixth century B. C., believed that the sons of men by a life of virtue and by the purifications of the Orphic ceremonies might enter into bliss after death. Among the Orphics and their opponents the subject of a lost Paradise became prominent and interest in the Golden Age of the past increased as men's thoughts turned toward a Golden Age of the

1. Hastings: Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. I, pp. 194ff.

2. Hesiod: Works and Days, 109 ff.

future.

As time went on, the concept of the Golden Age became more and more one of an era of love and peace in which all war and hatred were unknown. This aspect although implied in Hesiod, was first emphasized by Empedocles.

Interesting developments arose from the tradition. Men who no longer believed the legend used the theme in books of social reform in which they described the world as it should be and denounced it as it was. Among the folk the story took on added features. The Golden Age became a time when all the blessings of life were bestowed on man by nature, and plenty and idleness were the universal conditions of life. We find the myth taking a still different direction. It became a comic theme and appeared often in old comedy. The satiric treatment of the legend was continued to even greater lengths by the common people and a folk tale of a Topsy-turvy Land was the result.

As Greek learning and Greek culture grew, belief in Greek mythology waned. Then philosophy entirely usurped the place of the old religions among the educated. Philosophy could not entirely free itself from superstitions and the Golden Age legend had its influence upon the different systems.

The ethical significance of the story is made of most importance in a version by Aratus which shows evidence of Cynic influence modified by Stoic thought. The ages are reduced to three, Gold, Silver and Bronze. At first men were peaceful tillers of the soil having no knowledge of civil strife nor of laws. The goddess Dike lived on earth and mingling with the human race taught individuals to observe the things necessary for the happiness of all. In the

Silver Age the kindly simplicity was departing. Men were learning more about life and Dike, though residing still on earth, had withdrawn into the mountains and rarely came forth from her hiding place. But the Brazen Age saw the real down fall of men, for then he made the first sword, then first he slaughtered oxen for food. Dike hating the race of men left the earth and became a star in heaven. The Stoic interpretation of the legend is that the mental and material progress of man had been at the expense of moral and physical strength.¹

However this tradition and the theory of decline did not occupy the center of all intelligent discussion.

The period after the Persian Wars was one of great hopefulness in Greece and we find the people, especially the Athenians, rejoicing in the advance from savagery to the rich culture of their own time.² But this exultation did not last. Men began to feel that civilization was not improvement, but rather an increase of greed, luxury and cruelty. This reaction of feeling affected such men as Hippias, Socrates, and Plato. The philosophical system of the Cynics is founded on the belief that men must return to primitive conditions of life if they would possess the early virtues.³

The Epicureans denied the existence of a Golden Age in the past or in the future. The life of the early man was in their eyes one of ignorance, suffering; their only joy was their brute strength which made it possible for them to endure the hardships of cold and hunger. Gradually arose the arts, and life became easier. The Epicurean theory of ascent will be treated in detail in the next chapter.

1. Smith: Hastings, Encyclopoedia Religion and Ethics, Vol. 1, pp. 194 ff. (351-364.
2. Smith: Ibidem . 3. Norlin: Classical Philology, Vol, XII, pp

Since men are always affected by the opinions and beliefs of those about them it was impossible that two ideas directly opposed could exist, could continue side by side in unmodified forms. It is not surprising, therefore, that the two ideas of progress and decline should tend to merge into one theory. The partial reconciliation of the two distinctly different views was accomplished when the oriental doctrine of cycles was accepted into Greece and merged with the tradition of world ages. "The most important force in this process of reconciliation, so far as it was accomplished at all was a gradual realization among thoughtful men of the fact that the ideal of life traditionally associated with the Golden Age, though it seemed attractive, was, in reality, unfit to pose as the highest development". ¹

As light alternates with darkness, and as the seasons follow each other in fixed succession, so the universe eternally changes but in definite and recurrent cycles. This theory, Babylonian in origin, was first introduced into Greek philosophy by Heracleitus.

An idea of the essential points of the cyclic doctrine can be gleaned from Plato who has treated the subject with varying degrees of completeness in several separate works. When the eight heavenly bodies have completed one or more revolutions about the earth and all occupy their original positions at one time, a world year or a magnus annus has elapsed. At this point the Greek traditional element enters. For one magnus annus all revolution is forward and this is the time of the Golden Age. Cronos rules the universe. Harmony is everywhere. Men born of earth begin life in old age and grow young. There is no pain, no toil, no war, and no women. At the end of a magnus annus Cronos departs, leaving to its

1. Smith: Ibidem.

own devices the universe, which immediately begins to revolve backwards. The new age is ushered in with natural calamities, fire, floods, upheavals, and continues in discord. By the time the new world age is at hand the universe is ready to fly off into space but Cronos rescues it from its desperate state, reverses the direction of revolution and the allotted number of years of peace and happiness follow.

Decline and advance of a kind exist side by side in this theory although the change from good to bad and bad to good is sudden and of gradual growth. But it is a doctrine that all joy and excellence must give way to sorrow and inferiority, but these must, in turn, withdraw at the assigned time that the Golden Age may return. The story of the birth of old men from earth and their growing youthfulness bears a close resemblance to the Christian doctrine that men arise from the grave, which they entered old and worn out, to the eternal bliss and youth of Heaven. Considering the source of the Greek Cyclic theory and the fact that Jewish tradition was influenced to a certain extent by Babylonian beliefs one can but wonder just what is the relation of these two details of two concepts of ideal happiness.

The Stoics have a modified cyclic theory. The world, arising from the four elements, fire, air, earth, and water, develops all the forms of plant and animal life and the Golden Age is born. But virtue gradually dies, evil grows and a decline follows which continues until the end of the age comes when the universe is reduced into elemental fire. When the destruction is complete, the construction of the universe takes place and a new period begins which varies from the old in no detail. The souls of men are destroyed in the

ἐκ τῶν στοιχείων but identical ones arise in the new world.

Later the flood legend was brought in to Greece and adapted to the theory. In the new form destruction by water alternated with destruction by fire.

This new development led to another. After two of the elements, fire and water were given such importance in the tradition there was a tendency to give some place to the other two. In analogy with the four seasons were the four ages of man and to each was assigned a dominating element. In their traditional order, fire, air, water, earth, they are symbolic of degeneration from spirituality to sensuality. The Golden Age is the age of fire the Iron Age is the age of earth and coarseness.

About the second century B. C. there was a revival of mysticism and many of the Orphic beliefs, somewhat changed, became general. This was the time at which the Sibylline Books were composed.¹ The Sibylline Books told of nine successive ages each worse than the last which should be followed by a tenth which was the beginning of a new order.² After the time of Sulla there was a wide spread rumor that the last age foretold by the Sibyl was near an end and the Golden age was near at hand. Virgil has made this superstition immortal in the fourth Eclogue.³

The Etruscanidea is a very interesting one. They divided the World Age into saecula, the length of which varied slightly. A saeculum was as long as the life of the man in each generation who lived to the greatest age. The end of a saeculum was marked by portents. To each race the Gods have assigned so many periods, ten to the Etruscans, twelve to the Romans and different numbers

1. Smith: Ibidem.

2. Müller-Deecke: Die Etrusker, pp. 314-15.

3. Smith: Ibidem.

to the other nations. There were eight nations which number corresponds to the eight day week. When all the nations had lived their allotted time a new world order began, which, though different from the preceding age, seems not to have been thought of as necessarily better or worse. The life of each nation was a growth to a maximum development followed by the evil-fate destined by the Gods.¹

With this brief survey of the early ancient ideas on the subject of advance and decline finished, we turn our attention to an examination of the Roman thought during the Republican period.

1. Müller-Deeke: Die Etrusker, pp. 309-16.

II. The Ideas of Progress and Decadence in the Roman Republic

The remains of Cato's written works are extremely fragmentary with the exception of the De Agri Cultura, which is a practical discussion of methods of farming and contains little or nothing of Cato's views on civilization, customs, or morals. The passages which refer to these things are taken from fragments of his speeches and the Origines.

In a number of references to the past Cato's interest seems to be historical without any comparison or contrast with present times and likewise without regard to the merit of the practise or usage. The statements merely establish its antiquity. For example Servius on Verg. Aen. V, 755, on the lemma Urbem designat aratro) "Quem Cato in originibus dicit morem fuisse, conditores enim civitatis taurum in dextram, vaccam intrinsecus iungebant et incincti ritu Gabino, id est togae parte caput velati parte succincti, tenebant stivam incurvam, ut glebae omnes intrinsecus caderent, et ita sulco ducto loca murorum designabant, aratrum suspendentes circa loca portarum." In this case as in many of the others where no inference can be drawn as to Cato's approval or disapproval, we have Cato quoted merely as an authority. Servius is interested in the information as a bit of antiquarian lore only and its relation to Virgil's statement; he quotes no more than is necessary for his purpose.

In the following, Cato is referring to the customs of the past with a practical purpose, for he is arguing a point in common law.

"Atque ego a maioribus memoria sic accepi si quis quid alter ab altero peterent si ambo pares essent, sive boni sive mali essent,

quod duo res gessissent, ubi testes non interessent, illi, unde petitur, si potius credendum esse, nunc *****
si non melior Gellius est Turio, potius oportet credi, unde petitur?"¹

We know from Plutarch that Cato believed that for men of the present a study of the past was an inspiration to good. "καὶ τὰς ιστορίας δὲ συγγράψαι φησὶν αὐτὸς ἰδίᾳ χεὶρὶ καὶ μεγάλῃς γράμμασι, ὅπως οἴκοθεν ὑπάρχουσι τῷ παιδὶ πρὸς ἐμπειρίαν τῷ παλαιῷ καὶ πατρίῳ. ὠφελεῖσθαι."

That Cato made deeds of men of the past his standard of action, and compared his deeds with that standard is indicated by the following. "Iussi caudicem proferri, ubi mea oratio scripta erat de ea re quod sponsionem ~~feceram~~ cum M. Cornelio. tabulae prolatae. maiorum benefacta perlecta, deinde quae ego pro re publica fecissem leguntur. ubi id utrumque perlectum est, deinde ascriptum erat in oratione numquam ego pecuniam neque meam neque sociorum per ambitionem dilargitus sum."³ Keeping in mind that Cato made the deeds of the past a standard of action for men of the present, let us turn to a passage where he publicly decries present conditions. "quis hanc contumeliam, quis hoc imperium, quis hanc servitutem ferre potest? nemo hoc rex ausus est facere. eane fieri bonis, bono genere gnatis, boni consulis? ubi societas, ubi fides maiorum? insignitas iniurias, plagas, verbera, vibices, eos dolores atque carnificinas per dedecus atque maximam contumeliam inspectantibus et popularibus suis atque multis mortalibus te facere ausum esse? set quantum luctum, quantum gemitum, quid lacrimarum, quantum fletum factum audiui? servi iniurias nimis aegre ferunt. quid illos bono genere natos, magna virtute praeditos opinamini animi habuisse

1. Pro. L. Turio Contra Cn. Gellium.

2. Life of Marcus Cato, XX, 5.

3. De Suo Sumpto.

atque habituros, dum viverent? " 1

If we are to judge what a man thinks on any subject from what he says we must first be assured of his sincerity. Many modern students of literature might find in the superlatives, the rhetorical questions, and the climactic repetitions of the Romans a tendency to overestimate the case which renders the style insincere and artificial. But in a law court one's purpose is to affect the feelings of those who will decide the point in question. Restrained style has no place there. Therefore, we must make due allowance for national tendencies of expression and for the fact that a passage is an argument of a case before we condemn as insincere on the grounds of style.

But on the other hand it is the duty of an advocate to his client to establish certain points in his favor. The counsel's belief in what he is saying is not of prime importance. Each advocate places his client's claims in the most favorable light. The duty of the deciding body is to choose between these conflicting claims so presented. Therefore, the fact that an appeal is made in a speech of prosecution or defense does not necessarily show that the speaker himself feels the power of such an appeal, but it must indicate that the advocate believes that the deciding body will feel the power of it. When a sentiment appears in such an oration, one may be reasonably sure that it is an idea with which the greater number of people are in sympathy. But when, a statement is supported by other similar expressions of the advocate at various times and under various conditions it may well be taken to illustrate the speaker's own feelings. According to Livy, Cato during his candidacy for the censorship declared his intentions of

1. In Minucium Thermum de Falsis Pugnis.

restraining modern profligacy and of reestablishing the morals of the ancients.¹ Plutarch says that men admired Cato because he lived as his fathers had lived and was not affected by the introduction of new customs into the State.²

I maintain that this passage shows two things. Supported by statements from his own speeches and from views upon the conditions of earlier times and of his day, addressed to men whose opinion Cato wished to influence, it indicates that the idea was an agreeable one to his contemporaries ~~and to him~~.

In later times classical writers mourned the impudent boldness of their generation but it had then become a mere rhetorical commonplace. There is a note of sincerity in the sentence which follows. "Atque quamquam multa nova miracula fecere inimici mei, tamen nequeo desinere mirari eorum audaciam atque confidentiam."³

Cato considered the increasing independence of women a dangerous tendency. "Principio vobis mulier magnam dotem attulit, tum magnam pecuniam recepit, quam in viri potestatum non committat. eam pecuniam viro mutuum dat. postea, ubi irata facta est, servum recepticium sectari atque flagitare virum iubet".⁴

Livy has reproduced Cato's speech against the proposed repeal of the Oppian law, a provision which limited the extravagance of women. That Livy is quoting the exact words of Cato is doubtful; in all probability he was familiar with the written speech and made his adaptations from it. The passage is long and I quote only the more significant sentences. "si in sua quisque nostrum matre familiae, Quirites, ius et maiestatem viri retinere instituisset, minus cum universis feminis negotii haberemus; nunc domi victa

1. Ab Urbe Condita Libri, XXXIX, 41.

2. Marcus Cato, IV.

4. Suasio Legis Voconiae.

3. Dierum Dictarum De Consulatu Suo (Libri), 2.

libertas nostra impotentia muliebri hic quoque in foro opteritur
et calcatur, et, quia singulas non continuimus, universas horremus.

* * * * *

maiores nostri nullam, ne privatam quidem rem agere feminas sine
tutore auctore voluerunt, in manu esse parentium, fratrum, virorum;
nos, si diis placet, iam etiam rem publicam capessere eas patimur
et foro quoque et contionibus et comitiis immiscere * * * * *

* * * * *

date frenos impotenti naturae et indomito animali et sperate ipsas
modum licentiae facturas; nisi vos feceritis, minimum hoc eorum
est, quae iniquo animo feminae sibi aut moribus aut legibus iniuncta
patiuntur. omnium rerum libertatem, immo licentiam, si vere dicere
volumus, desiderant. III quid enim, si hoc expugnaverint, non
temptabunt? recensete omnia muliebria iura, quibus licentiam earum
adligaverint maiores vestri per quaeque eas subiecerint viris;
quibus omnibus constrictas vix tamen continere potestis. * * * *

* * * * *

IV saepe me quaerentem de feminarum, saepe de virorum nec de
privatorum modo sed etiam magistratuum sumptibus audistis, diversis-
que duobus vitiis, avaritia et luxuria, civitatem laborare, quae
pestes omnia magna imperia everterunt. haec ego, quo melior
laetiorque in dies fortuna rei publicae est imperiumque crescit
et iam in Graeciam Asiamque transcendimus omnibus libidinum il-
lecebris repletas et regias etiam adtrectamus gazas-, es plus
horreo, ne illae magis res nos ceperint quam nos illas. * * * * *

* * * * *

ne eas simul pudere, quod non oportet, coeperit, quod oportet, non
pudebit * * * * *

simul lex modum sumptibus uxoris tuae facere disierit, tu nunquam facies. nolite eodem loco existimare, Quirites, futuram rem, quo diut, antequam lex de hoc ferretur." ¹

By quoting at so great length I fear lest I may seem to attach too much importance to a passage which may be only Livy's interpretation of Cato's speech on the Oppian law and which may even contain ideas from other orations of Cato. For the most part this passage is offered to support the very short passage from the speech on the Voconian Law. There are two points in it however which should be noticed for themselves although we must not make secondary evidence of too great weight.

The Oppian law was not an extremely old one, not more than twenty years old, according to the answering speech of Lucius Valerius. Cato was conscious that the ancestors of the Romans had felt no need for such a law. Unless some reason could be given for this fact it was in itself felt to be an argument for the repeal of the law. Such an argument Lucius Valerius uses in pleading for the repeal of the law. To meet the objection that the Oppian Law was an innovation Cato says that the evil which produced the need for such a law did not exist in earlier days. Such a statement from a modern man would not necessarily imply a decline of civilization because the modern man is aware of the complexity of conditions and causes, but from a citizen of ancient Rome it does imply such an idea. The second point of interest is that although it is an argument for an innovation, the statement is in harmony with the Roman idea of the excellence of the past and the inferiority of the present.

Cato's attitude toward prosperity and good fortune was not

1. Ab Urbe Condita Libri, XXXIV, 2ff.

unlike that attributed to him by Livy. "Scio solere plerisque hominibus rebus secundis atque prolixis atque prosperis animum excellere atque superbiam atque ferociam augescere atque crescere; quo mihi nunc magnae curae est, quod haec restam secunde processit, ne quid in consulendo advorsi eveniat, quod nostras secundas res confutet, neve haec laetitia nimis luxuriose eveniat. advorsae res edomant et docent. quid opus siet facto. secundae res laetitia transvorsum trudere solent a recte consulendo atque intellegendo."¹

Although not always consistent Cato was sincere. He disapproved of the importation of Greek culture² but he studied the Greek language late in life and his works showed evidence of his acquaintance with Greek writers³.

We have noted one instance in which he approved an innovation although he justified it as necessary to combat an evil which had recently grown up in the State.

That he believed the Romans of his day inferior to those of the past and had fears for the future welfare of the State unless men turned to the ideas and ideals of their forefathers is evident. It is highly improbable however that had any theory of a decline from a Golden Age. He must have known of such a legend but he was too practical and materialistic to dream of days of which he had no knowledge. His interests were Roman and personal. The past and the present were his concern as they applied to his country and his family. He urged reforms, which indicates that he thought improvement possible. His reforms, it is true, were always directed toward the past, but the past, although Cato may not have comprehend-

1. Oratio Pro Rhodensibus.

2. Plutarch: Marcus Cato.

Livy: Ibidem.

3. Plutarch: Ibidem.

4. Mommsen: Römische Geschichte, 3.

ed this fact, had been a period of growth and change.

Mommsen states that Cato fought symptoms not causes.¹¹ This criticism seems to be a just one. Cato feared that under too favorable circumstances the Roman State would become weak but he bitterly opposed Scipio Nasica, who urged that Carthage be spared in order that Rome's sway might not be entirely undisputed and that she might always have this menace as a stimulus to civil and military fitness.

It is probable that in the minds of those who listened to Cato's speeches and read his books the idea that the State must cling to past traditions if it was to endure was felt if not always clearly formulated. As the opposite idea of progress is a vague one in the minds of many people to-day so in the past the idea which Cato represents was a general if an indefinite feeling. Cato expresses the Zeitgeist of the ancients as Goethe expresses it for the moderns. Each is the early important exponent of this Zeitgeist and for that reason the ideas are fresh and vigorous. Certainly the man described by Plutarch, the author of De Agri Cultura was not a poetic romanticist who pictured the past to himself as a time when life was all leisure, and glory, though as worthy of attainment, much easier to acquire.

1. Mommsen: Römische Geschichte, III, 11.

In the fragments of the early histories, other than those of Cato, there is little material pertinent to this discussion. References to these works in later literature are not infrequent but for the most part the histories are cited as sources of information. Rarely do we find in the quotations anything which shows an interpretation of historical facts.

The few lines from the Annals of Valerius Antias which follow are full of the Roman distrust of innovations and of luxuries. "sed cum liquoribus odoratis offendissent fragrantia pocula, vetustioribus anteposuisse res novas, invasisse aviditer, dulcedine potionis captos hausisse plus nimio, abdormivisse factos graves".¹

Cato's fierce warfare against luxury often appears to be due to the prejudice of a narrow and bitter man but Aulus Gellius commenting on a statement of Q. Claudius Quadrigarius has brought into clear relief the characteristic Roman attitude toward luxury.

"Consimiliter Q. quoque Claudius in primo annalium 'nequitiam' appellavit luxum vitae prodigum effusumque in hisce verbis: Persuadent i cuidam adolescenti Lucano, qui adprime summo genere gnatus erat, sed luxuria et nequitia pecuniam magnam consumpserat." ²

In this very short and imperfect fragment we see its author, C. Cassius Hemina, looking with questioning eyes into the future. whether his inquiry is born of despair at the evils of his day or of a philosophical interest in the plan of the universe each one must decide for himself, if this point is decided at all. "Qua fine omnis res atque omnes artes humanitus * * * * * que aguntur?" ³

Two thousand years have passed since the words were written for the

1. H. Peter: Historicorum Romanorum Reliquiae, Vol. I, p. 240.

2. Ibidem, p. 213.

3. Ibidem, p. 108.

first time; people, customs, and ideals have undergone many changes but the question is still a vital one.

The fragments of the speeches of the orators are important for the question under discussion for supporting evidence rather than for any additional ideas on the subject.

In these days of social unrest, of trade-unions and Bolshevism this bit from a speech of Tiberius Gracchus is suggestive of our own times. "οἱ δὲ αὐτοκράτορες ψεύδονται τοὺς στρατιώτας ἐν ταῖς μάχαις παρακαλοῦντες ὑπὲρ τάφῳ καὶ ἱερῶν ἀμύνεσθαι τοὺς πολεμίους, οὐδεὶ γὰρ ἔστιν οὐ βωμὸς πατρῶος, οὐκ ἡ φίλοι προγονικὸν τῶν τοσούτων Ῥωμαίων, ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ ἀλλοτρείας τρυφῆς καὶ πλούτου πολεμοῦσι καὶ ἀποθνήσκουσι κύριοι τῆς οἰκουμένης εἶναι λεγόμενοι, μίαν δὲ βῶλον ἰδίαν οὐκ ἔχοντες."¹ This is a plea for reform and reform is more closely related to progress than to decline.

This is especially true in the case of Tiberius Gracchus for he was not a conservative reformer, nor did he hesitate to resort to extreme measures in opposition to the precedents of the States.²

The following fragment of a speech of C. Memmius is a denunciation of the times, an appeal to the Romans to remember the spirit of their forefathers. "Nam illa quidem potest dicere, his annis quin-

1. Cortese: Oratorum Romanorum Reliquiae, p.72.

2. Mommsen: Römische Geschichte, IV, 2.

The works of Plautus present many problems to anyone who turns to them for definite information. In the first place the plays we have may be more or less corrupted forms.¹ A producer of plays to-day sometimes changes whole scenes and among the Roman there was much less of the feeling that a man had a right to the praise or blame of his work and that neither should be taken from him by others.

There has been much discussion as to how much of the plays is original with Plautus and how much is copied from Greek models but since New Comedy, with the exception of a few fragments, is lost, the question is still an undecided one. If matters concerning plot and technique are doubtful, how can we hope to separate into classes those things which relate to the spirit of the work and to say with assurance that these things are Greek and these are Roman? A good translation, that is a sympathetic reproduction of the author's work, is not the most common thing to-day and if we should grant that Plautus plays are no more than translations, which concession I do not make, we would still have to consider this Drama more than any other form of Literature is liable to various individual interpretations and the translation of one speech might give an entirely different idea to a whole scene.

The Greeks and Romans were two peoples, their national traits were dissimilar. At this time Greek culture had not permeated Rome to so great an extent as it did later although the process must have already begun or Cato's insistence on things Roman for Romans seems without cause.

1. Legrand: The New Greek Comedy (translated by Loeb), p. 285.

It is reasonable to assume that Plautus in working over the New Comedy into Latin introduced native elements both unconsciously and deliberately and that the resulting plays are therefore a blending of Latin and Greek customs and views which in some instances we may be able to classify but of which in many other cases we are in ignorance.

Since men like new things only so long as they do not contradict and conflict with their own ideas, the Greek elements in Plautus are not likely to be in opposition with fundamental Roman ideas.

The plays of Plautus would be of little assistance in learning the opinions of the author if these questions just discussed, did not exist, for the plays are vivid portrayals of character types and the ideas expressed are those consistent with the character who speaks.

The plays are valuable to us because we get a many sided picture and see the beliefs of the people in their variant forms, all of them treated without a great deal of seriousness.

One type represented in the plays is the old fashioned conservative who shakes his head at the evil present but feels less bitter-
ly on the subject than Cato. Megaronides rebukes his friend Calli-
oles in Trinummus thus;

"Nam si in te aegrotant artes antiquae tuae,

(sin immutare vis ingenium moribus)

aut si demutant mores ingenium tuum

neque eos antiquos servas, ast captos novos,

omnibus amicis morbum tu incuties gravem,

ut te videre audireque aegroti sient" ¹

A parasite's reply to his daughter who warns him that he is ruining her chances for marriage contains in it a charge against the present.

"tace, stulta. non tu nunc hominum mores vides,
quodiiu modi hic cum mala fama facile nubiter?
dum dos sit, nullum vitium vitio vortitur." ¹

This is clearly an allusion to the avaritia which was so frequently lamented by the writers of the Republican period. It probably was one of the so-called laughs of the play although the sentiment was certainly not a mirthful one. It is not for this reason a less real criticism.

There is a type of the conservative whose love of days gone by is bound up with the tender associations of lost youth. The lines are worthy of Nestor.

"multa ego possum docta dicta et quamvis facunde loqui,
historiam veterem atque antiquam haec mea senectus sustinet;" ²

There is also the bitter criticism of the present which is due to temporary irritation. In Mercator we find a young man condemning his townsmen and saying that matters become worse every day, because he thinks his mistress lost to him forever. ³

The things of the past are not always spoken of with respect. Megaronides reproached Callicles for not holding to old time virtue but elsewhere a friend rebukes another for being old-fashioned.

"Quin tu istanc orationem hinc veterem atque antiquam amoves?
proletario sermone nunc quidem, hospes, utere," ⁴

1. Persa, l. 385 ff.

2. Trinummus, l. 380-81.

3. L. 837 ff.

4. Miles Gloriosus, l. 751-2.

The following contains in it an implication of decline but a justification of individual action by present standards.

"sed si sint ea vera, ut nunc mos est, maxime,
quid mirum fecit? quid novom, adulescens homo
si amat, si amicam liberat?"

The father answers,

"vetu' nolo faciat" ¹

The father evidently wants the boy to be neither old-fashioned nor modernistic if such practises were especially common at the time as Calidorus says.

In another play we find the two opposed types in conflict, the father who would excuse his son's action on the grounds of present custom and the pedagogue who condemns that action with the earlier moral standards in mind. The pedagogue speaks first complaining of the boy's deeds and reminding the father that he was not allowed so much freedom

"alii, Lyde, nunc sunt mores,"

the old man says soothingly, and the pedagogue answers bitterly,

"id equidem ego certo scio", ²

and for the next ten lines informs his master how unfortunate this difference is. ²

It is natural that ridicule should be a large part of ancient comedy. Ridicule is of two kinds. There is that kind which belongs to the vaudeville stage, which exists only to produce a laugh; there is that kind, the purpose of which is to show the absurdity of certain customs or ideas. Some of the plays of Barnard Shaw and J. M. Barrie illustrate in a very different manner the latter type.

1. Pseudolus, 1. 433 ff.

2. Bacchides, 1. 437 ff.

It is important that we consider Plautus' ridicule and classify that from which we expect to draw any conclusions. Plautus unfortunately approaches too often vaudeville standards but although the humor is perhaps always farcical, it is sometimes not mere burlesque but satire.

The man who takes undue pride in the deeds of his fathers is to-day a humorous character. This was not the case in earlier days but surely there is a sly attack on pride in tradition when the parasite boasts,

"Veterem atque antiquom quaestum maiorum meum servo atque optineo et magna cum cura colo." ¹

In very similar manner a slave who is about to cheat his master out of some money says,

"sic ego ago, sic egerunt nostri." ²

A few lines farther on the same slave speaks, caricaturing those who seek and invent new things ever unsatisfied with the old and well established ones. Epidicus coins a word and when his puzzled listener questions him about it he answers lightly,

"nil moror vetera et volgata verba." ³

The following may be original with Plautus, probably written soon after the repeal of the Oppian law. ⁴

"quasi non fundis exornatae multae incedant per vias,
at tributus quom imperatus est, oregant pendi potis:
illis quibu' tributus maior penditur, pendi potest.

quid istae quae vesti quotannis nomina inveniunt nova?" ⁵

1. Persa, 1.53-4.

2. Epidicus, 1. 340.

3. Ibidem, 1. 350.

4. Westaway: The Original Element in Plautus, p. 17.

5. Epidicus, 1. 226.

The old gentleman who gives this speech reminds one of Cato.

" nam meo quidem animo si idem faciant ceteri
opulentiores, pauperiorum filias
ut indotatas ducant uxores domum,
it multo fiat civitas concordior,
et invidia nos minore utamur quam utimur,
et illae malam rem metuant quam metuont magis,
et nos minore sumptu simus quam sumus." ¹

Realization of the complexity of life is not so exclusively modern as we are inclined to think it. Emerson's law of Compensation is here stated backwards and the result is as pessimistic as Emerson's view is optimistic.

"Dic mihi, an boni quid usquamst quod quisquam uti possiet
sine malo omni, aut ne laborem capias quom illo uti voles?" ²

Whether Plautus is a brilliant creator or an imitator only, he has summed up a Roman characteristic in this one line.

"nam hi mores maiorum laudant, eosdem lutant quos conlaudant" ³
The Romans almost without exception admired to an unusual degree their forefathers and their institutions and customs but none of them, not even Cato, could follow in the footsteps of these early Romans as they thought they should.

The personal views of Plautus himself must remain unknown to us. Since he translated Greek plays, we may say that he was acquainted with Greek literature and Greek culture. That he translated the plays because he wanted the mass of people to learn something of that culture is possibility. But we may argue on the other hand

1. Aulularia, l. 478.

2. Mercator, l. 145-6.

3. Trinummus, l. 292.

that he wished the Romans to develop along national lines and therefore adapted the Greek plays for Roman use. In the prologue of Trinummus when Luxuria accompanied by her daughter Inopia comes on the stage, the author let pass a very good opportunity to deliver his views on luxury and it is rather surprising to find a Roman neglecting to treat the subject. He may have thought that the people were hearing enough of that sort of thing from Cato and feared to hurt his play or he may not have been particularly interested in the subject.

We can not argue a great deal from the material in the plays but there are a few things which we may find valuable. The time of Plautus was the time of Cato and that was a period of change. Greek civilization was coming into Rome and some welcomed it while others fought it. Those who disapproved of new practises would extol the old and mock the new; the others who delighted in the new culture would mock at established usage as old fashioned if a new one was supplanting it. These two classes of people are represented in the plays. But as later writers show the profound respect of the Roman for his forefathers never died and those who accepted changes the most cheerfully praised their ancestors as Plautus himself has said.

There is little material in the plays of Terence which relates to the subject which we are discussing. An occasional reference to the greater excellence of the men of earlier days may be found.

"ne illius modi iam nobis magna civium penuria est antiqua virtute ac fide!"¹

The theme of present inferiority becomes in this instance a courteous speech of a slave to an elderly man. It is a mere conversational convention.

"ita non ut olim, sed uti nunc, sane bona."²

Here we have a reference to the decrease of sincerity.

"namque hoc tempore

obsequium amicos, veritas odium parit."³

This lack of sincerity is charged against civilization to-day. More primitive peoples are either truthful or mendacious; only the cultivated occupy the middle ground. The reason is easy to assign; the simple mind says, "Yes," or "No"; the complex mind is skilful enough to hide its meaning behind words without seeming to do it. But the Roman judged by results only and found it evil; motives and causes he did not study.

Terence merely suggests these things which most of the other authors dwell at length upon. He is almost conspicuous because of his lack of interest in the subject of decline. The fact that he was not a native Roman may explain his disregard of the topic.

1. Adelphoe, 1. 441-2.

2. Heauton Timorumenos, 1. 524.

3. Andria, 1. 68-9.

Lucilius is an author whose work might be of much importance to us if we had more knowledge of it. Some short fragments which may be direct references to decay are of little value because the context is lacking.

"O curas hominum! O quantum eat in rebus inane!"¹

This exclamation from the first book of the Satires may be interpreted in two ways. The first part of Book I treats of the council of the Gods and such a sentiment as the one quoted above is quite in keeping with the character of the Roman deities. But we must remember that this is not drama but satire and satire is concerned with the author's opinions rather than the faithful portrayal of characters. Therefore, the more plausible interpretation is that the words represent Lucilius' own feeling.

"The Gods were called together in council concerning the evils which were slowly creeping in and to discover a means by which they could bring succor to the Roman Commonwealth."²

"consilium summis hominum de rebus habebant"³

"quo populum atque urbem pacto servare potisset amplius Romanam"^{4, 5}

He sees the State consumed by a slow poison:

"serpere uti gangrena malo atque herpestica possit"⁶

These are the conditions as he sees them.

"nunc vero a mani ad noctem, festo atque profesto

totus item pariterque die populusque patresque

1. Marx: C. Lucilii Carmina, Vol I, 9, p.4.

2. Schanz: Römische Literaturgeschichte, VIII,1,1³, p. 211.

3. Marx: ibidem, 4, p. 3.

4. --- ibidem, 5, p. 3.

5. Cichorius: Untersuchungen zu Lucilius, pp. 219-20.

6. Marx: ibidem, 53, p. 6.

iactare indu foro se omnes, decedere nusquam,
uni se atque eidem studio omnes dedere et arti,
verba dare ut caute possint, pugnare dolose,
blanditia certare, 'bonum' simulare 'virum' se,
insidias facere, ut si hostes sint omnibus omnes."¹

Virtue he defines for us later as follows:

"virtus id dare quod reipsea debetur honori
hostem esse atque inimicum hominum morumque bonorum,
hos magni facere, his bene velle, his vivere amicum"²

But men mistake virtue, avarice has blinded them to true worth.

"aurum atque ambitio specimen virtutis utrique est,
tantum habeas, tantum ipse sis tantique habearis."³

Our knowledge of Lucilius must be at best, superficial. One cannot judge truly the ideas of a man whose work has come to us in such unconnected bits.

The development of the satire at this time is of some significance. Although in Rome satire was not so restricted a form of literature as it is with us, there is in Lucilius' works the element which we consider a fundamental one of modern satires, attacks on customs and institutions. The period was one of comparative peace and much prosperity but it was an age of pessimism. Reforms were everywhere urged but almost nowhere carried out. Rome seems to have had a presentiment of coming evils but even in that time no strength to ward them off. Although we must admit our inability

1. Marx: ibidem, 1228, p. 84.
2. ---: ibidem, 1333, p. 91.
3. ---: ibidem, 1119, p. 76.

to draw conclusive evidence from Lucilius, there is I think no doubt that he too believed that evils were too common in the State and reform necessary.

"Concerning the question of the cultural development of the human race there were in Antiquity two diametrically opposed views. According to one there was in the beginning a Golden Age like Paradise from which, generation by generation, by a continuous degeneration, the present world has come. According to the second view man has advanced to his present intelligence and standard of living from an almost animal life. The Epicureans are representatives of this latter view."¹

Epicurean thought is Greek in origin but it was absorbed into Roman life and a Roman poet was the most brilliant exponent of the Epicurean doctrine. In the fifth book of De Rerum Natura Lucretius has given us an opportunity to study the logical development of the Epicurean theory.

1. Eduard Norden: Jahnsche Jahrbücher, Vol. XIX,
Supplement, pp. 411 - 428.

According to Lucretius primitive men were "wretched mortals" living after the manner of wild beasts.

"vultaque per caelum solis volventia lūstra
volgivago vitam tractabant more ferarum"¹

"multaque praeterea novitas tum florida mundi
pabula dura tulit, miseris mortalibus ampla."²

Their life was one of lawlessness, joyless and full of terror of wild beasts, a continuous struggle for a meagre existence.

"nec robustus erat curvi moderator aratri
quisquam, nec scibat ferro molirier arva

* * * * *

"nec commune bonum poterant spectare neque ullis
moribus inter se scibant nec legibus uti.
quod cuique obtulerat praedae fortuna, ferebat
sponte sua sibi quisque valere et vivere doctus"³

Lucretius has drawn at great length the picture of the life of these early men and he has not made it a pleasing one. So vividly has the poet presented the conditions, in which they lived, the suffering, the ignorance, the lack of all those feelings which the Romans as well as ourselves held in esteem, that we can not read this portion of the book without repulsion at the brutality.

The progress of man began with the discovery of the use of fire. This was followed by the building of huts for shelter and the establishing of family life. Families formed leagues of friendship and a loose tribal organization arose. Language gradually evolved from the meaningless cries which men uttered.

1. V, 931 f.
2. V, 943 f.
3. V, 933 ff.

"Inque dies magis hi victum vitamque priorem
commutare novis monstrabant rebu' benigni,
ingenio qui praestabant et corde vigeant."¹

Later towns were built, rulers or kings led the people, and wealth was discovered, Then arose the great bane of humanity, ambition for power which wealth gave. In the madness for that power men trampled down all authority and chaos ensued. But, wearied of feuds man took a forward step because of the very disorder of things and the more intelligent taught the rest to frame codes of laws and to enforce them. This portion of the argument is extremely modern. There is in the rise of order from disorder a suggestion of Goethe's own idea of the evil force continually producing good and in the theory that the mass of mankind is led to higher levels though the efforts of an advanced few, a parallel to many modern writers of whom Ibsen and Matthew Arnold may serve as examples.

In the meantime, as men saw about them many things which they could not explain, they had conceived of powerful and deathless beings who ruled the universe, and the fear of the Gods arose. This development Lucretius must have considered mere change not progress, since the main purpose of the poem was to combat this very dread of the Gods. Epicurus who had shown the fallacy of such a belief had led mankind to the high levels of the Gods.

"Humana ante oculos foede cum vita iaceret
in terris oppressa gravi sub religione
quae caput a caeli regionibus ostendebat
horribili super aspectu mortalibus instans,
primum Graius homo mortalis tollere contra

est oculos ausus primusque obsistere contra,
quem neque fama deum nec fulmina nec minitanti
murmure compressit caelum, sed et magis acrem
inritat animi virtutem, effringere ut arta
naturae primus portarum claustra cupiret.

* * * * *

quare religio pedibus subiecta viciissim
opteritur, nos exaequat victoria caelo."¹

During all this time the arts were developing the metals had been discovered; garments of woven cloth had replaced the pelts with which men first protected themselves from the cold; they became skillful in the cultivation of the soil; from the birds they learned to sing and from the wind as it whistled through the dried reeds they learned to make music by blowing through hollow stalks.

This is the brighter side of Lucretius' philosophy. But all through this account balancing the joy of it is a dark and sinister aspect which makes all man's striving seem useless and all his triumphs an empty show.

In those dreary days of savagery, Lucretius tells us:

"At genus humanum multo illud in arvis
durius, ut decuit, tellus quod dura creasset,
et maioribus et solidis magis ossibus intus
fundatum, validis aptum per viscera nervis,
nec facile ex aestu nec frigore quod caperetur
nec novitate cibi nec labi corporis ulla"²

The one glimmer of light in early man's life, his extraordinary physical strength, has grown fainter as the years pass and the other

1. I, 62 ff.
2. V, 925 ff.

lights which men may have kindled are only transient ones which must inevitably burn out in time.

" sed genuit tellus eadem quae nunc alit ex se.

praeterea nitidas fruges vinetaque laeta

sponte sua primum mortalibus ipsa creavit,

ipsa dedit dulcis fetus et pabula laeta;

* * * * *

iamque caput quassans grandis suspirat arator

crebrius, incassum manum cecidisse labores,

et cum tempora temporibus praesentia confert

preateritis, laudat fortunas saepe parentis

et crepat, anticum genus ut pietate repletum

perfacile angustis tolerarit finibus aevom,

cum minor esset agri multo modus ante viritum.

tristis item vetulae vitis sator atque vietae

temporis incusat momen caelumque fatigat

nec tenet omnia paulatim tabescere et ire

ad capulum spatio aetatis defessa vetusto."¹

This passage takes all the hopefulness out of such a one as the following.

"mutat enim mundi naturam totius aetas

ex alioque alius status excipere omnia debet,

nec manet ulla sui similis res: omnia migrant,

omnia commutat natura et vertere cogit.

namque aliut putrescit et aevo debile lanquet,

porro aliut clarescit et e contemptibus exit.

sic igitur mundi naturam totius aetas

mutat et ex alio terram status excipit alter:

quod potuit nequit, ut possit quod non tulit ante."¹

There is here an element which is found in Emerson and Goethe, an early beginning of belief in a law of compensation but it is a very small beginning.

At times Lucretius seems to view life as an ordeal and death a happy release into nothingness.

"quidve mali fuerat nobis non esse creatis?"²

The new born child,

"vagituque locum lugubri complet, ut aecumst
cui tantum in vita restet transire malorum."³

The poet seems to have found in men's moral motives no very marked progress.

"tum penuria deinde cibi lanquentia leto
membra dabat, contra nunc rerum copia mersat.
illi imprudentes ipsi sibi saepe venenum
vergebant, nunc dant sollertius ipsi."⁴

On the other hand one should not say that Lucretius thought there had been no progress in this direction. In a passage which has already been quoted he remarks that primitive men had no idea of a general welfare but each was interested only in himself ⁵
One of the early progressive steps was taken when,

"* * * * * amicitiam coeperunt iungere aventes
finitimi inter se nec laedere nec violari,
et pueros commendarunt muliebrique saeculum,
vocibus et gestu cum balbe significarent
imbecillorum esse aecum miserier omnis" ⁶

1. V, 828 ff.

2. V, 174.

3. V, 226 - 7.

4. V, 1007.

5. p. 2, quotation 4.

6. V, 1019 ff.

The last lines of the fifth book are characteristic of Lucretius' thought.

"sic unumquicquid paulatim protrahit aetas
in medium ratioque in luminis erigit oras.
namque aliud ex alio clarescere et ordinis debet
artibus, ad summum donec venere caecumen."¹

It ends with an abruptness which makes us instinctively ask, "What next?" Modern philosophy does not answer this question satisfactorily and many people do not try to answer it at all but Lucretius in preceding books has already done so. Nothingness follows, or rather unattached atoms which gradually combine again to form something. The highest good is the mere absence of evil; oblivion, man's only hope. These things may have some justification philosophically but they are not consistent with the idea of progress. Lucretius may rejoice with the greatest enthusiasm that Epicurus has caused mankind to attain heavenly heights but Lucretius claimed that the heavens were no farther away than they appeared to be.

A not unusual sentiment among men and women of the present is that we should live to our utmost capacity not thinking of life after death, of its rewards or punishments but with our minds intent on doing as great a task as fortune and ability will allow. "Life abundant on earth," these urge "Let the unknown Eternity take care of itself," We to-day believe that a life in the world is life abundant and unselfish happiness entirely worth while. How very similar in thought are these lines!

"sed quia semper aves quod abest, praesentia temnis,
imperfecta tibi elapsast ingrataque vita
et nec opinanti mors ad caput adstitit ante

quam satur ac plenus possis discedere rerum."1

Lucretius had modern elements in his philosophy. There is an idea of modern material progress an idea of less marked moral progress and an idea of compensating factors in evil but his idea of the nature of things through out the ages is a form of a theory of cycles. Nothing comes from nothing; atoms exist, combine in accordance with their natures, and finally separate again. During the process of combination we have a sort of progress, during the period of separation we have decline, The two general periods overlap, and combination and separation go on simultaneously for a long time. Therefore we find the Epicurean conscious of the complexity of things the mingling of good and evil.

Lucretius mentions two main causes of decline. The earth is growing old and, because she lacks vigor, all the plants and animals degenerate. In the second place, progress entails a certain amount of decline, for certain evils cannot arise until the world has advanced from a primitive state. Avarice can exist only when there is wealth; luxury, only when man has developed the arts to a rather high degree.

Of all the literary men who wrote during the period of the republic perhaps none has bewailed more constantly the conditions of his time or praised more highly the days of the past than has Sallust

"igitur domi militiaeque boni mores colibantur, concordia maxima, minima avaritia erat, ius bonumque apud eos non legibus magis quam natura valebat. iurgia discordias similitates cum hostibus exercebant, cives dum civibus de virtute certabant. in suppliciis deorum magnifici, domi parci, in amicos fideles erant. duabus his artibus, audacia in bello, ubi pax evenerat aequitate seque remque publicam curabant"¹

Speaking of conditions which existed later during the Jugurthine War, he said: "nam etiam tum largitio multis ignota erat, munificus nemo putabatur nisi pariter volens, dona omnia in benignitate habebantur"²

Sallust emphasized the fact that two things particularly boded ill for the state, the animosities of parties and the increase of avarice and luxury. "Ceterum mos partium popularium et factionum ac deinde omnium malorum artium paucis ante annis Romae ortus est otio atque abundantia earum rerum, quae prima mortales ducunt. nam ante Carthaginem deletam populus et senatus Romanus placide modesteque inter se rem publicam tractabant, neque gloriae neque dominationis certamen inter civis erat: metus hostilis in bonis artibus civitatem retinebat. sed ubi illa formido mentibus decessit, scilicet ea, quae res secundae amant, lascivia atque superbia incessere. ita quod in adversis rebus optaverant otium postquam adepti sunt, asperius acerbiusque fuit. namque coepere nobilitas dignitatem populus libertatem in lubidinem vortere, sibi quisque ducere trahere rapere. ita omnia in duas partis abstracta sunt,

1. De Coniuratione Catilinae, 9. 2. De Bello Jugurthino, 103.

rem publica, quae media fuerat, dilacerata. ceterum nobilitas factione magis pollebat, plebis vis soluta atque dispersa in multitudine minus poterat. paucorum arbitrio belli domique agitabatur. penes eosdem aerarium provinciae magistratus gloriae triumphique erant: populus militia atque inopia urgebatur, praedas bellicas imperatores cum paucis diripiebant."¹ The passage continues farther in this strain but this illustrates the trend of thought. The same idea is repeatedly expressed.

In the following passage he fixes the time of rapid decay in the years directly following the Punic War. He must have had in mind the second Punic War. "Postquam remoto metu Punico simultates exercere vacuum fuit, plurimae turbae, seditiones et ad postremum bella civilia orta sunt, dum pauci potentes, quorum in gratiam plerique concesserant, sub honesto patrum aut plebis nomine dominationes affectabant, bonique et mali cives appellati non ob merita in rem publicam omnibus pariter corruptis, sed uti quisque locupletissimus et iniuria validior, quia praesentia defendebat, pro bono ducebatur."²

Sallust is thought by many to have been much influenced by Cato the Elder. Certainly this excerpt is not unlike the old Censor. "accedebat quod L. Sulla exercitum, quem in Asia ductaverat, quo sibi fidum faceret, contra morem maiorum luxuriose nimisque liberaliter habuerat. loca amoena, voluptaria facile in otio ferocis militum animos molliverant. ibi primum insuevit exercitus populi Romani amare potare, signa tabulas pictas vasa caelata mirari, ea privatim et publice rapere, delubra spoliare, sacra profanaque omnia polluere. * * * * *

1. Ibidem, 41.

2. Historiarum Fragmenta, 12.

quippe secundae res sapientium animos fatigant, ne illi corruptis moribus victoriae temperarent."¹ For all Sallust's disapproval of Greek culture, he is thought to have studied Thucydides in order to improve his style. Cato, as we have already seen, turned to Greek letters for assistance of the same kind.

The bitterness of these arraignments is some what lessened by conflicting sentiments delivered at almost as great length. The De Coniuratione Catilinae opens with an appreciation of the power of the mind. "Omnis homines, qui sese student praestare ceteris animalibus, summa ope niti decet ne vitam silentio transeant veluti pecora, quae natura prona atque mentri oboedientia finxit. sed nostra omnis vis in animo et corpore sita est: animi imperio, corporis seruitio magis utimur; alterum nobis cum dis, alterum cum beluis commune est. quo mihi rectius videtur ingeni quam virium opibus gloriam quaerere et, quoniam vita ipsa qui fruimur brevis est, memoriam nostri quam maxime longam efficere".²

But cultivation of mind during Sallust's lifetime meant acquaintance with Greek culture. Cultivation of mind always means a striving after new and unknown things and this involves a change in the individual, which thing, if general enough, inevitably affects society.

Although the following passage does not deny a gradual and continuous decay, it affirms that there is an opposing and retarding force. "verum ubi pro labore desidia, pro continentia et aequitate lubido atque superbia invasere, fortuna simul cum moribus inmutatur. ita imperium semper ad optimum quemquam a minus bono transfertur."³

1. De Coniuratione Catilinae, 12, 5.
2. De Coniuratione Catilinae, 1.
3. Ibidem, 2.

This theory bears some likeness to that of the survival of the fittest, although the two pertain to different fields.

Sallust reproducing a speech of Julius Caesar in the Senate attributes to him this sentiment. "maiores nostri, patres conscripti, neque consili neque audaciae umquam eguere, neque illis superbia obstabat quo minus aliena instituta, si modo proba erant, imitarentur¹ A few pages beyond Sallust contrasts Caesar and Cato representing them as two most excellent men, the only remarkable men of that degenerate age. He praises Caesar's benevolence, generosity, and munificence, Cato's austerity, temperance, and simplicity. Sallust was a member of Caesar's party. It is hardly probable that Sallust would report a speech of which he disapproved, especially, if the De Coniuratione Catilinae is a political pamphlet written in the interests of the democratic party.² The man who made the remark quoted above was no conservative. History shows him to have been a somewhat unscrupulous radical who stopped at no innovation which redounded to his interests, although he prudently tried as far as possible, to disguise innovations as traditions. Sallust was the follower of this man, not of the severe Cato.

The authorship of the epistles to Caesar is still a matter of doubt. Schanz in the third edition of his Römische Literaturgeschichte writes that they may be genuine; certainly, he thinks, they were written in the period of which they treat. This view Schanz has held for a comparatively short time; in the second edition he dismissed them as unquestionably false. These documents if genuine are of value. The author urges Caesar to institute reforms and thereby grants two things, a need of improvement and the

1. De Coniuratione Catilinae, 51, 37.

2. Schanz: Römische Literaturgeschichte, VIII, 1, 2, 3 p. 167

possibility of it. But there is a definite statement that all things which rise must fall and that Rome is destined to fulfill this law. Reform is therefore a mere delay of inevitable evil. "ego sic existimo: quoniam orta omnia intereunt, quo tempestate urbi Romani fatum excidii adventarit, civis cum civibus manus conserturos, ita defessos et exsanguis regi aut nationi praedae futuros"¹ This passage reminds one of the Etruscan theory that a certain number of ages is allotted to each nation. Unfortunately this evidence is worth little since we know so little of the origin of these two epistles.

The declamation against Cicero contains nothing of additional interest on the subject of advance or decline. Its genuineness, although doubtful, is by no means unlikely.²

Sallust's long observations on the degeneracy of his age and the superiority of the past do not impress the reader as entirely sincere. The idea of decay has become a tradition, an habitual attitude of mind, a literary common place, by means of which he sheds melancholy, one may almost call it a romantic melancholy, over his monographs. By the repeated expression of his opinions, which most often relate to this theme, Sallust has made his historical work highly subjective. He represents himself as watching life from a distance because he cannot enter the sordid corruption of politics.

The few things which we know of Sallust do not suggest that type of man. Despite his disapproval of parties he was a member of a party and enjoyed some advantages because of its power. He probably ceased from political activity from necessity and not be-

1. Ad Caesarem Senam De Re Publica Oratio, I, 5.

2. Schanz: Römische Literaturgeschichte, VIII? 1,2,3. p.181.

cause he found that he was becoming too much influenced by ambitious desires, as he implies in De Coniuratione Catilinae.¹ The events of his private life do not concern us at this time, but disregarding the things said of him, which may not be true, he was probably no better than his contemporaries.

We must not, however, dismiss as valueless the material which Sallust contributes. The idea underlying the long passages of rather prosaic moralizing had in it an element of truth. Rome was not the vigorous, thriving State which had existed in earlier days and the Romans were conscious of this fact. Sallust's diagnosis of the causes which had made the Catilinarian conspiracy possible is a sound one and the very things which he mentioned were in a large part responsible for the final collapse of the Empire. Of these causes, which Sallust enumerates, the first was the immigration of criminal classes from all parts of the world to Rome. A second was the desire for gain. Men who were dissatisfied with the state of their fortunes, remembering the days of Sulla when men became wealthy almost over night, hoped by revolution to increase their possessions in order that they might enjoy privileges and luxuries at that time denied to them. Also the youth were leaving the rural communities to come to Rome because of the poor wages paid for hard labor in the country and on account of the pleasures of city life. The result was a large class of unemployed in Rome. Last of all, there was the strife between the parties, which were willing to use any means to gain supremacy.² It is perhaps worth while to call attention to the fact that of these causes the first involves no real decay in society; the evil force was concentrated, not nec-

1. 3ff.

2. De Coniuratione Catilinae, 37.

essarily increased, although the power of the evil was increased.

Guglielmo Ferrero insists that luxury in Rome even at the worst period could not compare with the luxury of the present; writers of the Republic and Empire considered the luxury of their day as a symptom of degeneration and so bewailed the presence of it that the modern world has an erroneous idea on the subject.¹ Granting this to be true, the fact remains that if the love of luxury, even though not satisfied, was the absorbing passion of the majority of the people, it was much more dangerous than it is among a people where, although satisfied, it is only one of many interests.

We must not criticize too severely Sallust's lack of sincerity because he was inconsistent. Cato whose sincerity cannot be doubted could not follow out his theories to the letter. We have already seen that modern men do not act always in a manner consistent with the idea of progress. There is still another explanation for some of the apparent inconsistencies found in Sallust. Tradition and philosophy in Rome were full of the idea of either a continuous decline or an ultimate destruction. Sallust naturally connected any related matter to this general idea and clearly saw the significance of the relationship. There was no general theory of progress at this time. Ideas which were related to it were sporadic and their full import was not understood. Therefore in Sallust's writings we find opinions concerning the inferiority of the present unduly emphasized because the author had formulated them more clearly in his own mind.

Only in the epistles to Julius Caesar does Sallust show interest in the future and that interest is confined to reforms which

1. Characters and Events of Roman History, pp.3 ff.

shall delay Rome's inevitable fall. So far as we can judge from his unquestioned works only, he believed that Roman customs and morals had deteriorated. Whether he believed that a Golden Age lay back of the Republic and complete destruction of the universe ahead, we can not say. If the epistles to Caesar are ever found to be authentic, we may know that he believed in the destruction of Rome and of all things which arise. As we do not know Sallust's philosophy, we can not say definitely what the latter half of the statement signifies.

III. Conclusions

Much of the literature, which we have discussed, is fragmentary. The mass of the material is not so great as that of the period which follows, but in some respects the works are of more interest than those of the later time. We see Rome not yet grown to her farthest extent, entering upon her career as the mistress of the world, but, though she steps proudly, the nation trembles.

The idea of decline was the dominating one of the period. Only through the medium of the Greek philosophies, which were a large part of Roman thought during the later republic, is there a trace of the Hesiodic Golden Age. From that early doctrine the world had travelled far.

7 The Greek theory of decline after the early period was a combination of philosophy and legend, a curious linking together of logic and imagination. The Roman was neither as logical nor as imaginative as the Greek but he was more practical. The Greek idea influenced him to a certain extent but the basis of the Roman belief in decline was fact.

The early days of the Republic were days of marked growth. The life of the state passed in a series of struggles and successes. As time went on, growth became slower; as this happened, the Roman became more conscious of the evils, which existed, and the evils became more dangerous and more general. These two things were factors, which are most obviously the causes of the Roman's belief in decline.

The people were not analytic; they lamented the unrest, the

ambition, and the vice, but they could not conquer these things. Mommsen's criticism of Cato applies to the nation; they fought symptoms, not causes. The causes lay deeper than the surface. The real decline was in the individual spirit or soul.

The Roman had in his nature a certain amount of asceticism. Simplicity and self denial were the qualities of the true man. It was because of these two characteristics that Cato was so popular. Even high school sophomore knows that the Belgians were bravest because they were farthest from Roman civilization. Bravery and virtue were the same word in the Latin language.

When Greek culture was introduced into Rome, it became evident that the austere Roman was also a hedonist. He could not accept Greek ideas with a clear conscience nor could he refuse them. It is not surprising therefore that moral seriousness should grow less and that moral sensitiveness should in too many cases become moral callousness. Greek civilization was not the cause: it was the conflict between self-denial and self-indulgence and the repeated suppression of their sense of duty to their wishes which effected the individual. Luxuria and nequitia were so closely allied in the Roman mind that it is not surprising that they became associated very often in Roman practice.

Roman religion was an accumulation of rites and ceremonies; the philosophies were intellectual and moral systems; neither supplied an element of the emotion which humanity needs to lift it out of its petty activities. Love of country supplied this need and inspired men to endure toil and suffering for their great ideal, the state. But Patriotism is a force in times of peril and a convention in times of great prosperity. When Rome no longer needed

the devotion of every man, she no longer received it. The man turned to his own interests. He deteriorated into selfishness and he was vaguely dissatisfied.

The process had begun in Cato's time. It was not universal in Rome or it would have caused Rome's collapse years before it came. But these things are the causes of the Roman idea of decline. They accepted Greek philosophy because it was in harmony with their own tendencies. The exultant joy of Sophocles and Aeschylus they did not accept.

Lucretius is more than any other writer of the age an exponent of progress. We have seen in the preceding chapter that he too cannot avoid the theory of decline. But the part of his philosophy which deals with advance presents an interesting difference from our own ideas. Lucretius was an imaginative poet; the pictures which he paints for us are vivid and realistic. But the rich imagination is confined to the past. Things beyond the immediate future are merely suggested. This is characteristic of the Roman people; the past and the present hold their interest.

At the present day we talk of to-day and to-morrow. We call the past dead, we ignore it too much. Children in the school rooms talk gaily and lightly of inventions which will sometime be common but which we know nothing of. This change of emphasis is in itself sufficient to make the Roman and the modern man poles apart.

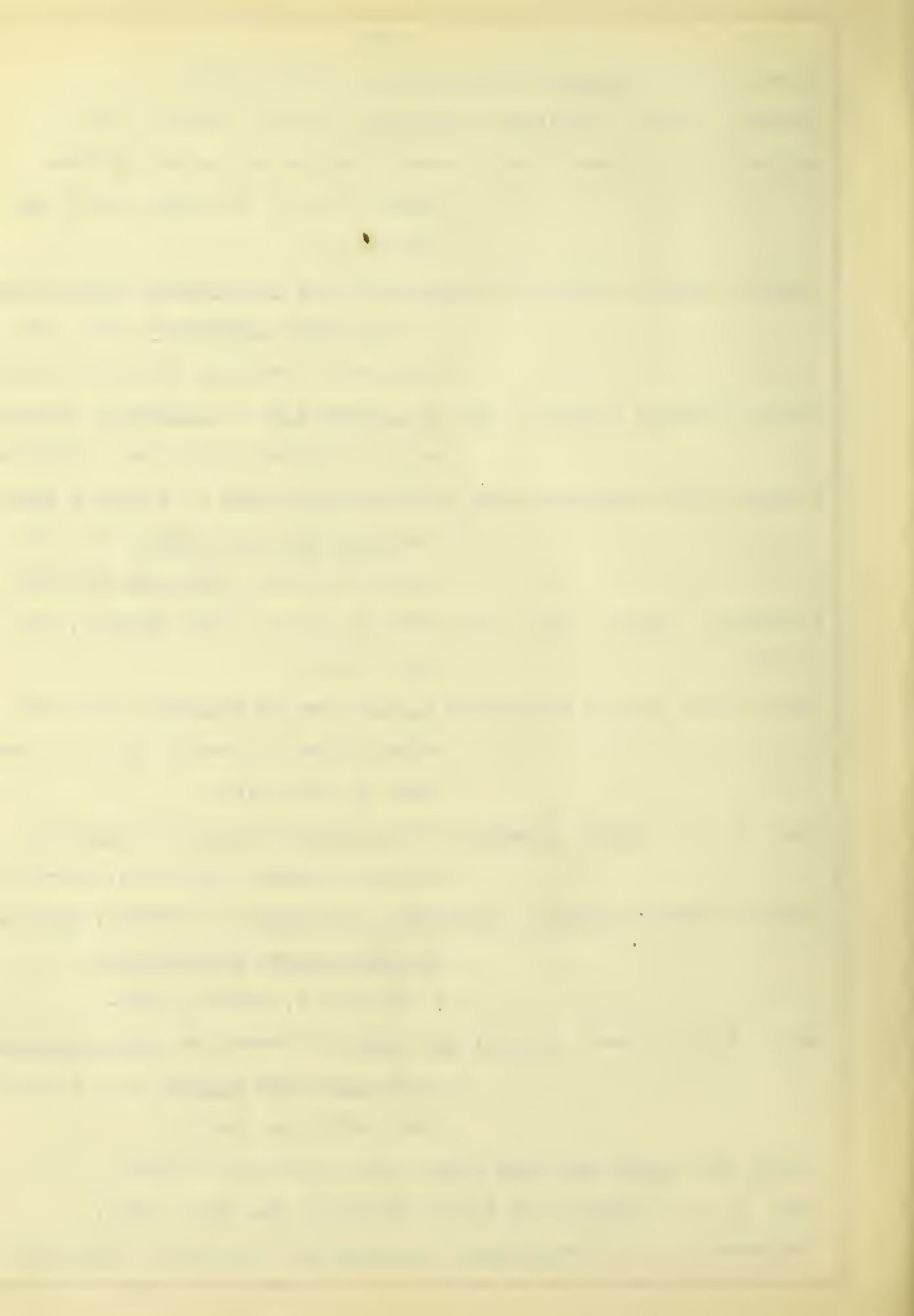
Since the ancient days when men believed that decline was the natural course of human events so many years so many great movements have intervened! The new Religion, the Crusades, the Renaissance, the Reformation, have all in turn occupied men's thoughts and their activities. Now we look forward to a bigger better

Future. Must as many ages pass, before humanity can comprehend the equal importance of all three, past present and future , and destroying the evil of the past can preserve and increase its good and add to it the new and beneficial?

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